

June 07: World Food Safety Day

VEDAS & FOOD SECURITY

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Mother Earth sustains the whole world, making it possible to produce a wide variety of good food. The knowledge from nature and from learned and elderly persons is inspiring. As spiritual beings, we need to stop turning a blind eye to the red signals. More than ever, it is time to make judicious use of the resources to ensure long-term food production and earnings, to care for all living and non-living beings in the production line, and to protect the produce – grains, vegetables, fruits, medicinal herbs.

...māta bhūmih putro aham prithivyah

(AtharvaVeda 12.01.12)

Our planet, Earth is beneficial and soothing as the mother is to her children. We need treat her right to benefit from her grace and splendor.

The Vedas spells out that we need to give food in charity as truly compassionate acts towards the needy. [YajurVeda: *Om vājasya nu prasave mātaram...*(18.30); *...vishvamastu dravinam vājo'asme* (18.31); *Vājo nah sapta...* (18.32); *Vājo no adya pra suvāti...*(18.33); *Vājah purastāduta...* (18.34)]

**...nikāme nikāme nah parjanya varshatu
phalavatyo na oshadhyah pachyantām
yogakshemo nah kalpatām**

(YajurVeda 22.22)

This mantra is the prayer for the welfare of the nation. May the clouds rain in showers for us according to the needs of the seasons. May the herbs, crops and trees mature with abundant produce! And may this land be blessed with a ceaseless cycles of growth, happiness and prosperity!

Īshe ekapadi bhavah...

(1st mantra, Saptapadi - the 7 steps & 7 vows)

In the Vedic (Hindu) marriage ceremony, this is an oath to engage in continuous righteous efforts and conduct so that the home is always full of healthy and nutritious food.

The World Food Safety Day (WFSD) is a call for actions that help prevent, detect and manage foodborne risks, thus contribute to food security, human health, economic prosperity, agriculture, market access, tourism and sustainable development. The 2021 theme '**Safe food today for a healthy tomorrow**' points to the instant and long-term benefits for people, the planet and the economy resulting from the production and consumption of safe food.

"Recognizing the systemic connections between the health of people, animals, plants, the environment and the economy will help us meet the needs of the future," reads a statement by WHO.

Everybody, from the farm to the table, has a role to play to ensure the food we consume is safe healthwise. Through WFSD, UN organizations (WHO, FAO), policy makers, private sector and the civil

society pursue their efforts to promote global food safety awareness and reduce the burden of foodborne risks.

Shared tasks include: (1) Ensure it's safe- Government to ensure safe and nutritious food for all; (2) Grow it safe- Agriculture and food producers to adopt good practices; (3) Keep it safe- Business operators to ensure food is safe; (4) Eat it safe- Consumers' right to safe, healthy and nutritious food; and (5) Team up for safety– Food Safety as a shared responsibility.

VEDAS ON FOOD SHARING

**"Om annapate annasya no dehyanamīvasya shushminah
Prapra dātāram tārisha oorjam no dhehi dvipade chatushpade"**

(YajurVeda 11.83)

As an all-inclusive meal time prayer, we seek the grace of Eeshvar (God), the Annadātā (ultimate Giver of food) - to provide all with safe and nutritious food, to grant serenity to farmers and all in the chain ensuring that food reaches us and to those who give food in charity, and to bless all living beings with health-giving food.

**"Moghamannam Vindate Aprachetāh Satyam Bravīmi Vadha Itsa Tasya,
Nāryamanam Pushyati No Sakhāyam Kevalāgho Bhavati Kevalādi."**

(RigVeda 10.117.6)

Food is neither auspicious nor beneficial to the person who does not give in charity, care for the needy, devas (the learned & elderly), and other living beings in the Creation. One who eats alone partakes sin.

- This is a strong indictment of anyone who violates the sacrosanct command of feeding others before eating. One who refuses food to the hungry seeker is taken by remorse, loses peace of mind and happiness.
- The Vedic (Hindu) philosophy upholds 5 daily obligations, amongst which the Balivaishva Deva Yajna is sharing food with the needy and other forms of life (ants, birds ...).
- The sharing of food with the needy and other living beings is a deep-seated tradition during festive times ...Sankranti, Holi, Divali.

We witnessed a revival of that spirit during the Covid 19 pandemic. People cared for neighbors and the needy. Food wastage was minimum. We took to some form of gardening and elementary food production. Authorities have put in place schemes providing facilities to grow food on terraces. The humane instinct took over the "survival of the fittest" instinct.

We need to thrive on that momentum of awareness
to redesign our lifestyle promoting safe food - key to good health
and
food security instrumental to the future of humankind.

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